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Initial scepticism towards Brezhnev missiles plan

The timing of Soviet political moves really is first-rate, as Mr Brezhnev showed in his speech to the 17th Soviet trades union congress.

He said that the Soviet Union would be deploying no more SS-20 missiles, a variety particularly feared in the West by virtue of its range, and not replacing the old SS-4s and SS-5s by new systems.

Providing the international situation so allowed, he said, Moscow even planned a unilateral reduction in medium-range nuclear missiles.

This offer applied for as long as the Geneva missile talks continued and the West had not embarked on Pershing 2 and Cruise missile modernisation as currently envisaged for autumn 1983.

The East bloc inevitably hailed the Soviet leader's offer as further proof of Kremlin will to achieve progress on disarmament and arms limitation.

In the West Mr Brezhnev's offer has met with initial scepticism, and rightly so. His moratorium proposal, in itself nothing new, is aimed at gaining acceptance of Soviet superiority in intermediate-range nuclear forces.

Moscow already has 300 SS-20 systems in deployment. Each has three nuclear warheads and two out of three are aimed at targets in Western Europe. The Soviet Union is right now setting up a further five SS-20 launchers.

Mr Brezhnev's proposal appears less sensational when it is borne in mind that Nato has also opted for a missile moratorium in all but name until the modernisation programme is due to start.

Since 1979 the West has chosen to dispense with missile modernisation. This has enabled Moscow to establish superiority in the first place.

What is more, the Soviet leader made no mention of halting production of SS-20s; and if it is true, as Western intelligence agencies and a number of politicians in Bonn claim, that Moscow has begun to deploy new short-range SS-23 missiles capable of hitting targets in the Federal Republic of Germany, even greater caution is called for.

Does the Soviet move risk ending as no more than a resounding tinkle? Mr Brezhnev, who with his latest offer belied claims that he was politically finished, cannot be so shortsighted.

His timing was much too good. In the United States a first peace movement with political backing has advocated freezing nuclear armament at current levels. In Western Europe, especially Germany, opponents of missile modernisation are loudly calling for an end to further missile deployment.

So the psychological climate for a political move aimed at relieving justified anxiety about more and more expensive arms programmes could hardly have been better for Mr Brezhnev.

Initial reactions in Washington and Bonn accordingly noted that the Soviet leader's latest plan had much in common with a move on the chess board.

Despite caution and scepticism there may yet be good reason for closer scrutiny of Mr Brezhnev's offer. Oddly enough, the reason could be in the part of the moratorium connected with the political threat.

Moscow, he said, would accept the moratorium until such time as either the missile talks between the superpowers achieved results or Nato's missile modernisation resolution was put into practice.

So far the assumption has been that the West would go ahead with missile modernisation if the Geneva missile talks failed to achieve results by 1983.

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Nigeria's President Shagari with Chancellor Schmidt in Bonn.

(Photo: Sven Simon)

Nigerian pays an historic visit to Bonn

President Alhaji Shehu Shugari was the first Nigerian head of state ever to pay Bonn a state visit; it was long overdue.

Nigeria is a regional great power in the making and already one of Africa's spokesmen. It would be a mistake to continue to maintain a low profile in ties with Lagos.

Top-level talks between Bonn and Lagos were last held when Bonn Chancellor Helmut Schmidt visited the Nigerian capital in 1978.

President Shagari's visit is important for bilateral ties and for Bonn policy towards Africa as a whole. Nigeria's opinions carry considerable weight at the United Nations and in the Organisation of African Unity. They played a significant part in helping and the Chad crisis.

It is the most populous country in Africa and lives mainly on its oil revenues. It runs one of the most up-to-date and largest military etablishments in Africa, ranking alongside those of Egypt and South Africa.

Until 1979, when the armed forces handed over power to an elected civilian government, Generals Murtala and Obasanjo largely based Nigeria's claim to leadership on their country's military might.

But since President Shagari has held power the emphasis has been on making friends. Nigeria as the largest parliamentary democracy in Africa sees an opportunity of basing its claim to leadership on more comprehensive foundations.

Population and petrodollars alone have not proved a sound basis. Nigeria is a textbook example of how petrodollars alone cannot solve problems of underdevelopment.

Since Nigeria is an Opec country, Bonn ended financial aid to Lagos in 1975, but technical and manpower cooperation have been continued intensively.

The country has such a shortage of skilled manpower that specialists sent out by GTZ, the Bonn government development agency, will be indispensable until further notice.

Mistakes in and inadequacies of Nigerian development planning are a further reason why German experts need to be sent out, especially as the country's problems seem likely to increase in view of the oil market situation.

Hanko Westermann

(Nordwest Zeitung, 18 March 1982)

Thatcher, Schmidt urge caution on East bloc trade

Both London and Bonn are keen to avoid a major split in Western trade policy towards the East bloc over the question of sanctions against Moscow.

This was one of many points agreed on by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during Herr Schmidt's visit to Britain.

Both are also keen not to be dragged into a state of heightened tension as a result of the Polish crisis.

Europeans would not benefit in any way from this.

Whitehall and Bonn have much in common because Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany are in similar positions.

Economically, both are fighting the repercussions of a slump that has led, in differing degrees, to unemployment and inflation.

In the European Community Whitehall and Bonn are the only members to pay more into the kitty than they get from the EEC.

Britain's refusal to allow this to continue has led to heated European dispute.

Their comments on trade between East and West must be seen in connection with the European fact-finding mission of Under-Secretary Buckley of the US State Department.

Notes were compared and views exchanged prior to EEC, Western economic and Nato summit conferences.

Agreement on contributions to EEC finances in Brussels is virtually ruled out because solution of the problem will depend on the line taken by other EEC countries.

But the desire for mitigation of American high interest rates is not limited to Whitehall and Bonn; if European economies are to stage a recovery it must be an all-European need.

There are no differences of opinion between the two countries on security policy either.

Mrs Thatcher backs to the hilt the Nato decision to go ahead with missile modernisation if the Geneva missile talks fail.

Britain is keenly following the progress of the Geneva talks between the superpowers.

Both Mr Brezhnev's latest missile offer and US preparations for a fresh round of Salt talks are sure to have been thoroughly discussed at Chequers.

(Der Tagesspiegel, 20 March 1982)

■ **THE WESTERN ALLIANCE**

Red not better than dead, poll results show

People in the West would rather fight than meekly submit to Soviet rule, according to a Gallup poll. The samples, taken in seven European countries and the USA, involved 8,000 people.

Hitler's contempt for what he considered to be the decadence of the Western powers is said to have deepened when he learned that the Oxford University Union debate had carried the motion that they would not fight for king and country if war broke out.

Aggressive dictators with an eye on possible conquests listen to that sort of thing.

Asked what they thought the result would be if a poll had been taken last week among West Europeans on attitudes towards the Soviet threat, many would surely have expected a majority to take a better-red-than-dead attitude.

Which makes the result of the latest Gallup polls taken on both sides of the Atlantic all the more startling: they reveal that an overwhelming majority in the West would would not submit without a fight.

The keenest to battle it out were those in the USA, Switzerland, Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The French lagged some way behind.

In no country did a majority say they would rather be red than dead.

Germans were clearly in favour of America's leading role in Western foreign policy.

On this question, the Swiss and British were much more reserved.

The results of the polls are reaffirmed by the attitude of the inhabitants of Hattenbach, a small village in Hesse which lies on the GDR border.

The villagers were told that a nuclear war could begin there.

Hattenbach was where the Americans had held war games based on the assumption of Soviet tank penetration that could only be halted by tactical nuclear devices.

The reason for spreading this information was obviously to shock the villagers into organising a peace demonstration.

But they remained totally unperturbed so much so that a TV reporter lost his temper with them.

The poll replies of the villagers were conclusive: "We need no peace movement; what we want is peace." "There are Soviet tanks only 30 kilometres east of here, and it's good that they know that there is something on this side of the border as well." "It's all part of the deterrence strategy."

Now we know that most Germans think exactly like the good Hattenbachers under their upright SPD mayor.

Naturally, this does not indicate a lemming-like death wish; it bears witness to the age-old feeling among Western people that freedom is a precious possession. This attitude is supported by the knowledge that the deterrence strategy has preserved the peace in Europe for long time and that there is no sign of any destabilisation.

And as long as the Soviet Union can be certain of this attitude on the part of the West this will not change.

Hans-Joachim Nimtz

(Frankfurter Neue Presse, 10 March 1982)

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher told them in Washington that Germany is America's finest and most dependable ally.

Opinion polls published by *Newsweek* back him up.

The sampling shows the Germans to be more American than the Americans.

They have a better opinion of the USA in general and of Washington's foreign policy in particular than any other Europeans.

They are also more convinced than other Europeans that the presence of American troops in Europe spells protection and security.

A better feeling across the Atlantic

And if President Reagan during his visit to Germany in June also visits Berlin (which now seems certain), these special ties between Germany and America will be strengthened still further.

He and his right wing conservative Republicans have up to now considered the British and the Reaganites' ideological next-of-kin, Margaret Thatcher, as the most dependable Nato allies in Europe.

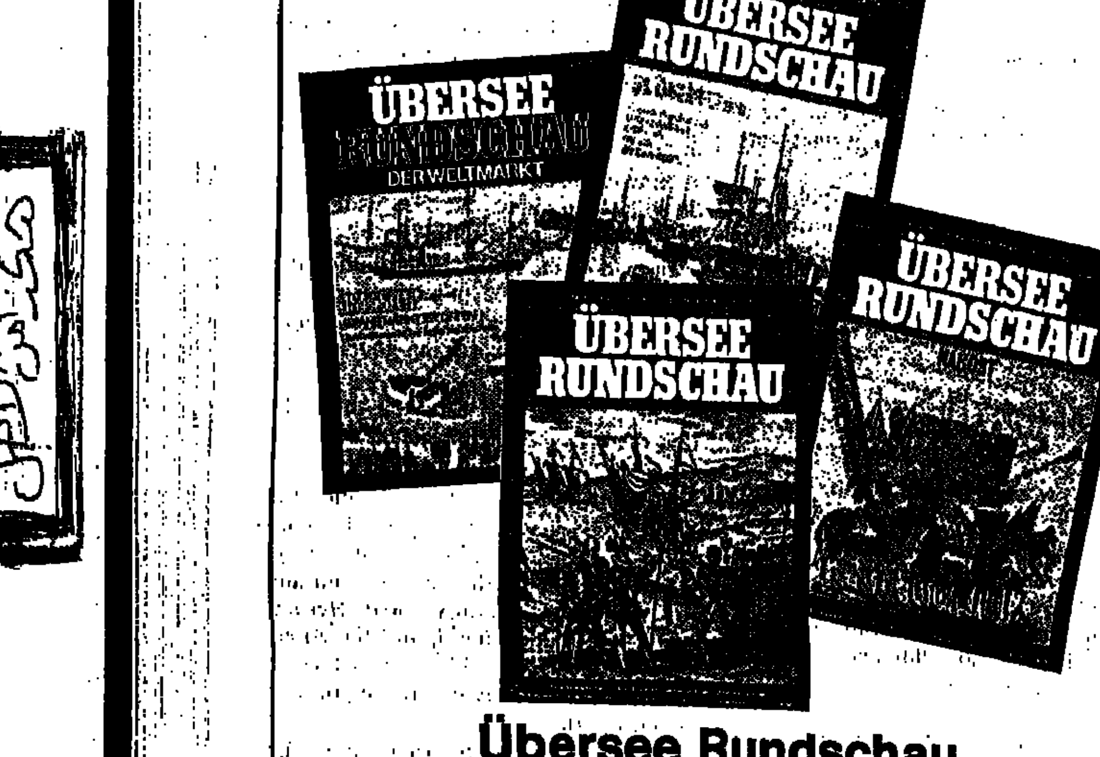
The optimistic avowals from Genscher wherever he went in Washington boiled down to a new silver lining on Nato skies.

Even cantankerous Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger desisted from mentioning the controversial gas-pipeline deal with the Soviet Union in his one-hour talk with Genscher.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig was all smiles in the White House Rose Garden when Genscher, after his talk with Reagan, stressed that Germany had to abide by its contract with the Soviet Union.

Atmosphere and tone of German-American relations have improved.

(Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz, 11 March 1982)



Just one huge contradiction

Unless the Gallup people have made a whopping mistake, a lot of people in Western Europe and the United States, especially politicians and political commentators, have been fooled into a false reading of public opinion.

There is no reason to assume the Gallup are wrong. They polled more than 6,000 people on this side of the Atlantic and more than 2,000 on the other about the Nato partners.

What they found sharply contradicts those who have been telling us every day about the rising anti-Americanism in Europe generally and Germany in particular.

The fact that more Americans (83 per cent) than Europeans would rather risk a war than submit to the Soviet Union is understandable.

The first major battles would take place in Europe.

What is surprising is that the allegedly fainthearted and neutralistic Germans — along with the Swiss and the British — spearhead Europe (70 per cent).

The French, who only a few weeks ago sharply criticised the Germans for their softness, lagged far behind.

But Germany has 19 per cent negative votes on the same question. This puts it in the vanguard — slightly ahead of Italy and Denmark — and shows the impact the Peace Movement has had.

Even so, the polls clearly show that the SPD left wing with its emphasis on peace policy would not yet be able to come up with a marked success in an election.

On Reagan's policy, the Germans with their 40 per cent positive answers are surpassed only by the Belgians and the Italians in Europe.

The British are among the top sceptics (60 per cent); but Switzerland leads with two in three against.

Even conceding that here the rejection of Washington's economic policy has played a major role (the response by the British, who are reeling under the impact of the same monetarist home medicine, seems to bear this out) there still remains an undeniable result.

The Americans in particular should understand at last that frank criticism within the Alliance is in no way a hostile act. They should finally let the smoke of polemics waft away.

(Nürnberger Nachrichten, 9 March 1982)

Martial law in Poland stiffens Germans' defence resolve

Many more people in the West would rather fight than meekly submit to Soviet rule, according to a poll by the American Gallup Institute.

Gallup asked Americans and people in seven European countries whether they would risk a war rather than accept soviet rule.

In America, 83 per cent said they would. That was followed by Switzerland (77 per cent), Britain (75 per cent) and the Federal Republic of Germany (74 per cent)

Then came France (57 per cent), Denmark (51 per cent), Italy (48 per cent) and Belgium (45 per cent).

The poll results in Germany, with close to a three-quarter majority in favour of armed defence, are startlingly high considering the radical pacifist propaganda in favour of "Peace Without Weapons" and "Better Red than Dead".

But the willingness to defend the nation is not equalled by a similar approval of US foreign and defence policy. 60 per cent of the British respondents said they had "little faith in the wisdom of American foreign policy" — the same policy 57 per cent of Germans approve of.

Germany's defence determination has increased since martial law was introduced in Poland.

(Rheinischer Merkur/Christ und Welt, 12 March 1982)

■ **BUSINESS**

Unfair practice: a case of watching the watchdog

Warning offenders against the code of fair business practices is aimed at stopping black sheep from taking unfair advantage of customers.

Newspaper small ads offering an apartment for rent or a car for sale, followed only by a phone number, are a case in point.

This is assuming, as one often can, that the advertiser is an estate agent or a car dealer who admits neither to his name nor to being a dealer rather than a private advertiser.

Both trade associations, the estate agents and the car dealers, agree that action should be taken to put an end to such practices.

They are a clear breach of the rules of both fair trading and fair competition and an attempt to gain an unfair advantage over both customers and other traders.

This is how the Standing Conference of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHT) in Bonn puts it:

"Competitors whose interests are affected, associations for the promotion of commercial interests and consumer associations are entitled and called on to monitor the competitive behaviour of companies and to put a stop to offences by filing civil suits if necessary."

Fair trading associations do good and necessary work and their activities would never have been questioned had they not been entitled, by the terms of §683 and §1004 of the civil code, to charge a fee in lieu of expenses.

In recent years a standard fee has come to be accepted and even been acknowledged by the Federal Supreme Court. It ranges from DM130 to DM180.

A rash of dubious 'fair trading associations' has sprung up all over Germany in the past three or four years. By the terms of the Fair Trading Act they are *entitled* not only to warn an offender against business breaches of ethics but also to charge. This the newcomers have taken to doing, implying that otherwise they will take the offender to court. Reputable organisations have kept an eye on trading practices for years. Dr Hans Weyhenmeyer, legal adviser to the Retail Trades Association in Cologne, says the newcomers are an outrage, and everyone seems to agree that something must be done about them.

It is in the offender's interest to settle out of court and to give an assurance that he will not repeat the offence, and it is only fair to expect him to pay the expenses of the watchdog association.

But it is a right that has not gone unchallenged, as court actions have shown. Even so, most courts, except in Hamburg, accept the standard fee practice, and the courts are not alone in doing so.

Who was first to hit on the idea of making a killing in this way? Was it a lawyer with a practice that was not going too well? Was it a smart law student? Was it a failed businessman?

Whoever it was, about three or four years ago self-styled consumer and fair trading associations with fine-sounding names began to proliferate.

They dun offenders from Helmstedt to Aachen and from Flensburg to Passau, illegally for the most part yet seemingly in keeping with the law.

Businessmen whose offences against the code of fair practices are challenged prefer to pay up rather than risk litigation.

Maybe they were indeed in breach of the rules of fair competition. They are certainly unaware of their legal rights. They allow themselves to be bled because that seems the quickest way to settle matters.

No-one knows how many millions a year are charged in expenses by obscure organisations of this kind; everyone agrees that something must be done about them, and the sooner the better.

This is easier said than done. There are about 120 fair trading associations. Between 80 and 100 of them are said to be shady operators.

Advised by lawyers (either qualified solicitors or the barrack-room variety), students, housewives, commercial travellers, friends and relations get together.

They have statutes proclaiming unimpeachable aims such as consumer protection or commercial counselling drawn up, give their associations fine-sounding names, have them officially registered — and start billing offenders.

They pore over the small ad columns of the local newspapers to find breaches of fair trading, and as soon as they come across the slightest suspicion of an offence they send out a warning.

The wording is based on that of the warnings sent out by reputable fair trading associations. Reference is made to the offence and to the legal position in a polite covering letter accompanied by a declaration the offender is sent to sign.

"Messrs A," it will read, "acknowledge and recognise as such the breach of fair practices referred to by the B Association in their letter of such and such a date.

"The company undertake not to advertise in the improper way in question and acknowledge liability to a fine of DM3,000 should the offence be repeated.

"They also undertake to pay the association in lieu of expenses and in keeping with §683 and §1004 of the civil code the sum of . . . Place and date."

Payments of between DM130 and DM180 may not be much, but they mount up. An association based in Cologne is reputed to have used this licence to print money to net up to DM150,000 a month.

The board of governors of the association and its panel of monitors can themselves charge healthy fees in lieu of expenses against the cash that comes in.

Returns can be multiplied by setting up several organisations simultaneously and sending several warnings at the same time.

"In the Cologne area four new fair trading associations were set up at the same time," says Dr Weyhenmeyer. "A single offence was challenged in writing by all four on the same day.

"The warnings were written on the same typewriter, had the same wording, used the same reference number and demanded an identical DM180 in expenses."

In this case the public prosecutor is investigating their activities, and high time too!

If the offender refuses to pay, the association may try to obtain a court injunction ordering him to do so. Often all the court does is check whether the association operates within the strict bounds of its statute.

If it is found to do so, the offender will have to pay court and legal costs. But many associations rightly fear that courts will not acknowledge their right to bill offenders.

If the offender staunchly refuses to pay up, they will then call it a day. A ruling is shortly due by the Schleswig-Holstein high court in a case where the association might have been better advised not to go to court.

An association known as the Verband zur Förderung der Werbenden Wirtschaft e. V. is the plaintiff. The defendant is a Kiel car dealer.

The association does not even run an office, let alone a telephone. But it has an address and a bank account. Its president is a law student in his seventh semester, its vice-president a Kiel housewife.

But how is one to sort out the chaff from the wheat? Should fair trading associations be banned altogether? Commercial organisations agree that they should not.

Werner Junge, deputy business manager of the Standing Conference of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, feels that despite the moneymaking activities of a few black sheep the system of self-control has been a success.

It is, he says, more effective and makes more sense for commerce and industry to take offenders to task themselves rather than to leave the job to go-

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Company went broke, but no one told the stock exchange

There were red faces at the Frankfurt stock exchange when brokers learnt they had been buying and selling shares in a public limited company six weeks after it was declared bankrupt by a local court.

Gebrüder Fahr AG, of Frankfurt, had the receiver sent in in January when a court ruled against the management's application to go into liquidation on the ground that assets were insufficient to cover liabilities.

The stock exchange was surprised and upset to learn, when it was finally notified, by the company not the court, that it had been trading shares of a non-existent company, as it were.

No-one knew, it was said, although some must surely have had their doubts. Brokers had no idea, banks had no idea until trading was finally suspended. Shareholders, certainly buyers, can certainly have had none.

Gebrüder Fahr was originally a leather processing company. Offenbach, Frankfurt's twin city, is the centre of the German leather industry.

But since 1972 the company had ceased trading in leather and functioned solely as a holding company for the firm's assets, which, to judge by the way ownership changed hands and one board of directors followed another, cannot have been too healthy.

So news was usually bad news, and although Fahr shares had moved up and down over the years no-one really knew what the company was worth.

Investors must have realised since the September 1981 shareholders' meeting that the company was deep in trouble. The company report for 1980, although approved by the auditor, was not approved by the shareholders.

Shortly afterwards Dresdner Bank announced that it was stepping down as the company's stock market agent and adviser. So the Frankfurt stock exchange requested the company to appoint a new agent.

The Gebrüder Fahr board replied evasively, saying they were negotiating with a bank and would shortly notify the bourse.

In February the stock exchange sent the company a reminder. It was returned by the Post Office, addressee unknown. It was high time, you might think, for the stock exchange to look into matters more energetically.

Gebrüder Fahr had been on the agenda of every meeting of the stock exchange's board of governors for months, but trading was not suspended because the board, or so it seemed, was worried it might be held liable for damages.

The stock exchange, a governor said, has to be strictly neutral in its decisions and cannot suspend trading in a share until it knows for sure that the company has gone bankrupt.

There were many companies that were in financial difficulties, he explained, which was a legally tenable view, maybe, but hardly in the better interest of investors.

The exchange was rightly annoyed, when the story broke, that it had not been notified by the court, which that had refused permission to go into voluntary liquidation and called in the receiver but failed to brief it and the shareholders.

The court says that when an application to go into liquidation is refused it shelves the file. It is under no obligation to inform the public and has no cash to do so. Or ought the taxpayer to foot the bill?

This explanation seems somewhat bland. Red tape seems otherwise to get through much more money to less use than the cost of a letter to the stock exchange board.

At the time of writing no-one even knew how the company was finally to be wound up, given that the board of directors must, by the terms of the German Companies Act, initiate proceedings.

The last chairman of the management board, Günther Neubecker, cannot be traced and the stock exchange does not feel it is up to it to trace him.

Wolfgang Petereit, a Mainz lawyer and chairman of the supervisory board, is on holiday in Switzerland, where he is said by his partner to be doing research at the University of St Gallen and engaged in a project planned some time ago.

He was due to return soon. His partner was sorry but he did not know what the position was and could not comment.

Axel Schnorbus

(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung für Deutschland, 10 March 1982)

■ THE ECONOMY

Borrowing policy relieves money-market pressures

In most Western industrial countries, fiscal policy has failed to beat inflation. Scattered successes have been achieved, but these have been due primarily to central bank policies.

The Federal Republic of Germany public sector was much too late in changing its spending policies.

It was not until the drafting of the 1982 federal budget that Bonn attempted to keep its new debt down to DM27.5bn, though the true extent of indebtedness remains to be seen.

Yet what matters in assessing public sector deficits is not only the amount but also the manner of financing. And it is here that policy is extremely dubious.

Much of the borrowing now is done abroad. By the end of 1981, Bonn, the federal railway system and the Bank for Reconstruction (which operates on behalf of the federal government) had borrowed close to DM60bn abroad.

This year, too, foreign countries, especially the Opec nations, will buy federal notes.

Naturally, this takes some of the pressure off the German money market becaused the more Bonn borrows abroad the less it has to dip into the nation's savings.

Another positive aspect of overseas borrowing lies in the fact that it helps finance the balance of payments deficit that would otherwise have had to be covered from foreign exchange reserves as has occasionally been the case.

The rapid dwindling of our current account deficit and the approximation of interest levels in the United States and in this country, resulting in the influx of foreign capital, have somewhat reduced the need to borrow abroad.

But the relatively low interest rates for deutschemarks and the suspicion that the deutschemark will win its duel with the dollar has made Germany's currency once more attractive to borrowers. This has resulted in considerable foreign borrowing in this country during the past few weeks.

The Bundesbank has called on the banks to curb these capital exports because otherwise, in case of an excessive capital drain, we would have to resort to borrowing abroad.

The negative effects of such a move would lie in the fact that interest payments to the tune of billions of deutschemarks would have to come from Germany's GNP which should actually have been available for distribution at home.

Another and much more important problem is the lopsided term structure of public sector borrowing.

Budget consolidation means not only restricting new borrowing by the state to tolerable levels so that money at reasonable interest rates would be available to private business for investment purposes; it is equally important that the public sector should borrow on a long-term basis.

State capital requirements on a major scale have largely contributed to the jitters on the money markets.

Due to the current high interest rates and the hope that this trend would be reversed, the public sector has been borrowing on a short and medium-term basis.

Of the government notes now in circulation, only four per cent have been issued for a term of ten years or more. More than half of current federal notes now have a duration of four years.

Moreover, investors are now also offering money on a short term basis due to uncertainties about the development of interest rates.

This had led to a paradoxical situation where short-term interest rates are higher than those for long-term borrowing.

The maturity period for more than 40 per cent of all public sector debts is less than four years now.

The consequence of this extraordinary development is growing repayments as a result of which the gross credit requirements (new debt and debt servicing) of all public sector budgets have grown at twice the rate of net credit requirements (new borrowing alone).

The federal government has adapted its financing instruments accordingly. Its 5-year federal bond has attracted considerable funds. And to cover their deposit requirements, the banks were forced to adapt their own bonds and other securities to those issued by the government.

The repayment of short and medium-term public sector borrowings thus has to be refinanced; and the bottleneck caused by debt servicing puts a burden on the money market.

Previously, it was safe to assume that investors in government securities would re-invest repayments and interest in new government bonds.

In essence, this boiled down to a self-financing potential of fixed interest security. Exactly this, however, can no longer be considered ensured.

Investors have become wary of the state; and, as a result, it is no longer possible to consider only net credit requirements by the public sector in assessing what the market will bear.

Today, such an assessment must be based on the total financing volume.

One of the consequences is a delay in reducing interest rates for long-term money.

In view of this dominant position of the state on the money market, Deutsche Bank has recommended that the public sector gradually revert to issuing more long-term bonds, which would have to go hand in hand with debt servicing that would not impose an undue burden on the market.

And exactly this has frequently been lacking so far.

Walter Trautmann

(Nürnberger Nachrichten, 8 March 1982)

Investors steer clear of company shares

Private investors are becoming more reluctant to invest in company stock.

Share portfolios cannot compete with fixed interest securities, even when tax relief on dividends is taken into account.

A look at the past shows that gains through the appreciation of stock have been very much the exception.

It is not as if the upper income bracket Germans had become timid and were no longer prepared to take risks in investing.

Some DM4bn to DM5bn a year goes into projects that are promoted through special tax relief. And nobody can say that all these projects are safe bets.

The mere possibility of making a profit is enough to attract money.

Yet shares stands no chance, say many nowadays.

The reasons are obvious: dwindling profits during the past ten years mean very few companies still get an adequate return on capital.

This coalition government has for years added straws to the camel's back. Now one too many has been added.

It is up to the government to figure out how many of the close to two million jobless owe their unemployment to its social reform policies.

Rudiments of economic common sense, as evidenced by the proposed job creation programme in the 1982 budget, are not enough rapidly to undo the mistakes of the past.

To shorten the recuperation process and speed up the capital accumulation by business that is needed for investments, Deutsche Bank's F. Wilhelm Christians suggests that the investment of saving in corporate stock be promoted through special tax provisions.

He proposes that a certain portion of stock purchases be tax free. He also suggests tax free dividend payments in cases where the dividend is ploughed back into German stock and tied up for a certain period of time.

He would also like the government to introduce a special rehabilitation bonus that would make it more attractive for stockholders to help rehabilitate their company by favouring capital increases in connection with capital reductions for the purpose of offsetting losses. The stockholder would then be issued a tax deductible loss-certificate.

But where is the government to get the money for such stock promotion?

Christians points to the added annual tax revenue as a result of the corporate tax reform and the fact that foreigners and other non-eligible stockholders cannot offset the corporate tax credit against their tax debt.

About one-third of the corporate tax paig by Germany's 100 biggest public companies is not used by the stockholders to offset it against tax owed.

But Finance Minister Hans Matthöfer is unlikely to agree. After all, the added revenue resulting from the corporate tax, which is in fact not due to the government, has long been included in the overall budget.

He will refuse to part with this money and spend it to promote investment in corporate stock. Moreover, this would meet with stiff resistance from his own party, the SPD.

And the FDP would not be prepared to risk another coalition dispute in favour of such "subsidies for stockholders" — that is, if its own MPs are even capable of following Christians' ideas.

In any event, classical market economy protagonists are bound to reject government crutches for stock investments. Essentially, they are right; but ideology alone cannot put corporations back on their feet. They need capital, and they need it now.

Kurt Wendt

(Die Zeit, 12 March 1982)

Budget full of problems

The Federal Budget next year is likely to be faced with that fact that revenue will be DM7.2bn less than expected.

This is the estimate collectively compiled by experts from the various public sectors, the Bundesbank and the economic research institutes.

Finance Minister Hans Matthöfer admits that this is going to make it extremely difficult to draw up next year's budget.

What will make it even more difficult is uncertainty about what extra spending might be needed.

Unemployment and defence are likely to claim more money.

Together, the tax shortfall and the probable increased expenditure is likely to alone give the government a deficit of DM15bn.

The position of the *Länder* and the municipalities is equally bad even though the pundits apparently do not see the future in too bleak a light.

They figure that the federal government, the *Länder* and the municipalities will be faced with tax revenue shortfalls of DM15bn.

This figure is largely due to the fact that last summer, when the last overall estimate was made, it was still impossible to predict extent and duration of our present economic slump.

If we are to believe the new estimates, 1983 would have to be a boom year and, to top it all, inflation would have to drop.

Only thus could we arrive at a doubling of the GNP growth from a *real* 1.[illegible] per cent to 3 per cent or a nominal growth rate of 6.7 per cent and a drop in the inflation rate to 3.5 per cent.

Nobody can deny the bold and probably unrealistic optimism evidenced by these figures.

But should the situation deteriorate the experts will have fallen short of the mark even with their latest horror figure. Hans Matthöfer the Bonn Finance Minister, is bound to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of these figures. In fact, he has already intimated that the deficit can only partly be plugged by new borrowing if we are to [illegible]lerably strain our capital market and raise the interest rates still further.

Even new Bundesbank profits would not solve the problems because they would only be the consequence of excessive interest rates that would hamper an economic upswing. And higher taxation would also be detrimental to the economy.

The only viable way out of the dilemma would be to cut back on government spending still further, which is anything but a pleasant thought.

Since there is no leeway left in our public sector budgets, the only cutbacks will once more have to affect subsidies and social security benefits. This would have to include even those benefits that the Social Democrats have declared taboo.

Already strained to breaking point, there is now every likelihood that Chancellor Schmidt's coalition government will founder on the financial crisis.

Given the impact of the election defeats already suffered and those still to come, the SPD is unlikely to drop spending projects that it considers indispensable — even if the German economy can no longer afford it.

Hans-Henning Zencke

(Kieler Nachrichten, 11 March 1982)

■ TRADE

Exports compensate for lull in domestic demand

The German export business is full of bounce. It is due to this sector alone that the economic slump is not a lot worse.

Last year, Germany exported goods worth DM397bn. That is DM47bn (13 per cent) more than in 1980.

Adjusted for inflation, this makes for a growth rate of 6 per cent — a lot considering the weakness of the world economy.

German business has always turned to world markets when domestic sales declined.

The German export business has been benefiting from the lively demand of the Opec countries which have thus been recycling their petrobillions.

An even more important boost to German exports was the rapid deterioration of the deutschemark in certain periods.

The depreciation — or under-valuation within the European Monetary System — of the deutschemark has enhanced the competitiveness of German goods which are still coveted worldwide due to their quality and the reliability of German suppliers.

Also, German exporters have benefited from the relative price stability in this country; and since they were interested in boosting sales, they raised their prices only minimally while foreign competitors hiked them considerably.

All this has reversed a trend that hampered German exports in the late 1970s, when the deutschemark had been appreciating steadily — not only nominally but in real terms as well.

An appreciation is regarded as nominal when it simply offsets the fact that prices at home are rising more slowly than abroad.

A real appreciation is appreciation that goes beyond this and actually reduces the competition potential of exporters.

The depreciation of the deutschemark on foreign exchange markets has now clearly overcompensated for the real appreciation of former years and improved the competitiveness of German exporters.

Naturally, there are considerable regional differences in export successes.

Trade with the East bloc has fallen behind expectations although it has always been viewed as reliable and full of growth potential.

But East bloc foreign exchange shortages and problems in raising Western credits have prompted a cutback on imports from the West.

As a result, Germany's export volume to the East has nominally marked time, thus declining when adjusted for inflation.

This was more than offset by the brisk business with the Opec countries, which showed a growed a growth of a whacking 53 per cent on 1980.

Here, the German balance of trade has even come up with surpluses since last autumn. This means that the oil bill is paid on the spot.

This has largely been made possible by the fact that the range of German export goods coincides with the requirements of those countries. About two-thirds of our shipments to the Opec nations consists of industrial plant and equipment.

Now, however, turbulence on the international oil market has caused the petrodollars to flow somewhat more slowly.

But even so, German export prospects on that market are not bad, if for no other reason than because the order books are full.

German exporters still pin a great deal of hope on the markets provided by Western industrial countries which absorb three-quarters of our exports (EEC alone: 47 per cent).

Although the economies in a number of our most important buyer-countries have only just been creeping along, German exports to the Western industrial nations rose by close to 10 per cent last year (to DM305bn).

Even sales to Japan rose due to the appreciation of the yen and that country's healthy economy.

But then, the Japanese did not twiddle their thumbs either. Their exports to Germany rose, and as a result, Germany's trade deficit with Japan also rose to more than DM8bn (1981).

Exports to the USA were up 21 per cent to reach DM26bn.

In fact, out trade with America is a textbook case showing the effects of the deutschemark depreciation.

In 1981, the Americans had to pay an average of 20 per cent less for the deutschemark than in 1980, despite the *fact* that American prices (up 10.5 per cent) rose at a much steeper rate than those in Germany (up 5.9 per cent). It was only natural, therefore, for the Americans to have grabbed what German goods were offered to them.

Among the branches of industry that showed a particularly startling export growth in absolute terms last year were the auto industry (up DM9.4bn), chemicals (up DM6.3bn) and mechanical engineering (up 5.3bn).

The German auto makers have succeeded in offsetting the poor domestic demand by brisk sales abroad.

Sales increases were particularly marked in Italy and France, countries that had erected barriers to ward off the irksome competition from Japan.

The Germans have naturally benefited handsomely from this move.

German makers of commercial vehicles did particularly well in the Middle East and in Africa.

The Opec countries alone bought 61,500 German commercial vehicles last year (1980: 43,800). Opec and the United States were also the main buyers of German chemicals.

What about mechanical engineering? Here, lost ground in the East bloc business was more than made up for by major deals with the Opec countries.

This branch of industry has also zeroed in on the threshold countries in the Third World. But Western industrial nations also came up with others accounting for about two-thirds of our machinery exports.

Unlike the Japanese, German mechanical engineering is benefiting from its wide range of products and the fact that it is quite prepared to provide custom made goods.

The Japanese still lack this kind of flexibility. They concentrate on a small number of products which they produce in large quantities. Though this gives them a certain superiority in some areas, the point is that these areas are strictly limited.

Agricultural exports also rose by 25 per cent last year, reaching DM21.6bn.

This excellent performance is not only due to favourable exchange rates but also to shortages on certain markets. The Germany also benefited from the close watch they kept on market trends.

For example: among the new products that German creameries developed for foreign markets is a cheese made from cow's milk with a taste resembling that of sheep-milk cheese. This has found eager buyers in the Middle East.

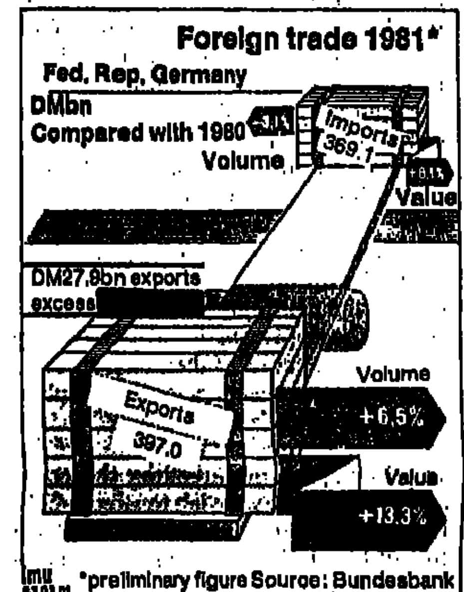
To put it in figures, this mock sheep cheese sold to the tune of 22,500 tons, accounting for a considerable portion of our total cheese exports of about 250,000 tons. This is a prime example of how ideas conquer markets.

But what does the future hold? Export surpluses rose from DM8.9bn to DM27.9bn last year, helping to reduce our balance of payments deficit from DM29.8bn to DM17.5bn. Experts hold that we need another DM29bn in export surpluses this year to balance our current account. This is an ambitious though quite realistic target.

Of course, this trend could easily be reversed should the deutschemark appreciate again. But then, at some point domestic demand must also come into its own once more.

Hans Kaunitz

(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, 13 March 1982)



*preliminary figure Source: Bundesbank

Watchdog

Continued from page 5

vernment agencies of one kind and another.

Bonn has now decided to act against the black sheep. An amendment to the Fair Trading Act envisages limiting the right to challenge breaches of commercial conduct to offences that directly and locally affect members' interests.

What is more, watchdog associations are no longer to be entitled to charge expenses for a first offence.

Until the new regulations are in force trade, industry and craft associations agreed last December on a code of practice for fair trading associations.

Its provisions are not binding but they will, it is hoped, end the worst excesses until such time as the amendment is law.

Thielmar Hambach

(Kieler Nachrichten, 17 March 19682)

■ PERSPECTIVES

Genscher warns: remember what Europe is all about

People in Europe have a dark image of the European Common Market, says Bonn Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher.
- **This was the image of farm surpluses and money problems.**
- **Writing in the March issue of 'Europäische Zeitung', Herr Genscher said these were urgent problems that must be solved.**
- **They could only be solved if political unification were kept in mind as the common goal.**
- **Many did not realise that the EEC had progressed towards becoming a democratic and constitutional community. It had made progress in developing a common foreign policy.**
- **Herr Genscher's article, written on the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, is reproduced below.**


Hans-Dietrich Genscher
(Photo: Sven Simon)

A quarter of a century ago, on 25 March 1957, six European countries joined together under the Treaties of Rome "determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union of the peoples of Europe," as it is formulated in the preamble of the treaty founding the European Economic Community.

On 25 January 1982, exactly two months before the 25th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, the foreign ministers of the Community of Ten in a third attempt failed to agree on financial and agricultural reform and also on several other matters.

This was a day of profound disappointment for me, as German Foreign Minister, but not a cause for discouragement. On the contrary, it once again showed the urgency and necessity of determined action in reviving the strength of the European movement, pushing ahead in the direction of European unity, and calling to mind the motivation and political purpose behind the Treaties of Rome, i.e. to bring about greater unity among the peoples of Europe.

The European idea can certainly not become reality in a community of lions' in which everyone is in pursuit of his own maximum benefit. Europe will not be the sum of national egoisms.

It can only be realised as a community based on solidarity. We should take care not to attach too much solemnity to this ideal. I realise it alone is no answer to everyday political problems. But there is also no reason to be ashamed of the European ideal and to hide behind the neutrality of objective necessities whose pragmatic advocates may be judged in terms of their own success.

Twenty-five years ago the inspired pragmatic foundations were laid for the citadel of European unification. We are now in danger of forgetting the construction plan. If we wish to successfully finish our building project, we will have to call to mind once again the common idea that underlies it.

The European Community is faced with the challenge of mastering the most difficult economic situation since its founding.

Political and economic pressures appear to be stronger than ever before and it has become harder than ever before to deal with the necessity of arriving at joint solutions. The public image of the European idea is no longer a vibrant concept. It has perhaps been degraded to the level of a somewhat annoying established notion, and I foresee the danger that it will become a rejected established notion.

To be sure, we have continued beyond the economic community. We have set up the goal of achieving European unity. With the direct election of the European Parliament we have moved ahead on the road towards a democratic and constitutional community.

We have made considerable progress in developing a common European foreign policy. I wonder how much of this is really alive in the minds of Europeans, from Copenhagen to Naples and from Berlin to Dublin.

I'm afraid that a much darker image of Europe has established itself. Many people see only farm production surpluses and budgetary problems.

All of these problems exist, are urgent matters on our agenda of action, and must be solved. However, they can only be solved, and this is my conviction, if we keep in mind the significance and aim of our co-operation — that means the political unification of Eu[...]

No one is able to nor wants to [...] away the political and economic p[...] lems at hand. But we must keep [...] common goal clearly in view. W[...] only be able to deal successfully [...] the everyday political problems of [...] community when we have learned [...] look beyond our immediate needs.

For this reason we have taken the [...] itiative and in agreement with [...] Italian government we have present[...] proposal for discussion and to how [...] community ought to be further dev[...] ped towards European unity.

The basic outlines of this proposal [...] known. For more than a year no[...] have described them publicly.

This initiative for a European A[...] intended to revive the idea of Europ[...] political unification. It will create fo[...] areas of co-operation a general fr[...] work consisting of what has alr[...] been attained. It is designed to [...] full use of the possibilities for fu[...] development and new ideas.

We have made considerable prog[...] in this community.

I see the Federal Republic of Ger[...] ny as being a "net beneficiary" in [...] ability to act in foreign policy matte[...]

Our initiative is aimed at more fir[...] establishing and further expand[...] what has already been attained in t[...] community. We know that we can [...] preserve what has been achieved [...] making constant efforts at fur[...] development.

In an international situation cha[...] terised by crisis and in view of men[...] ing economic trends I would like to [...] call the words of Walter Hallstein, [...] ber legal expert and committed Eu[...] pean, who in March 1957 before [...] signing of the Treaties of Rome said [...] the German Bundestag that the c[...] co-operation of the countries of Eur[...] was probably the last chance for [...] survival, ensuring free existence, eco[...] mic prosperity, and social progress.

(Europäische Zeitung, M[...])
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'The media has a tendency to speculate about alleged difference of opinion' — Hildegard Hamm-Brücher

'US sees isolationism as against its interests'

Hildegard Hamm-Brücher, Minister of State at the Foreign Office with special responsibility for German-American relations, is interviewed by Günter Kleer, of Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz.

Question: On returning to Bonn from a tour of the United States, Frau Hamm-Brücher, you referred, as coordinator of German-American relations, to ties between Germans and Americans ranging from "vague malaise" to "mistrust."

How do you account for this transition from an exemplary partner in Europe to a much-maligned bogyman with allegedly neutralist tendencies?

Answer: We note, not without alarm, that public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic runs the risk of drifting apart. This is doubtless due, to a considerable extent, to a substantial information shortfall on both sides.

There is also a tendency on the part of the media to speculate about alleged differences of opinion or to unnecessarily overemphasise such differences as naturally do occur from time to time.

In the American media especially there has lately been a tendency to suspect and seize on neutralist, pacifist and anti-American trends in the Federal Republic of Germany and to cast doubt on its reliability and predictability.

To some extent, of course, this is not a German-American but a Euro-American problem, with the emphasis on the Federal Republic.


Hildegard Hamm-Brücher
(Photo: Marianne von der Lancken)

Germany, given its history, its unsolved national issue and historically-based special relationship with Eastern Europe, is in many quarters felt to be more susceptible than most to neutralist tendencies.

We are currently trying, by intensifying our public relations work and improving our media presence in the United States, to eliminate mistaken assumptions and information shortfalls.

Jointly with my US opposite number, Under-Secretary Eagleburger, I am currently, as coordinator of German-American relations, preparing a number of programmes aimed at the younger generation.

The young are to be given greater opportunities of seeing for themselves the wide range of political and intellectual aims and value judgements we share.

For the generation that assumed political responsibility after the Second World War this conviction was a matter of course. What now matters is to hand it down to succeeding generations.

Questions: In the wake of the pipelines-for-natural gas contract between Europe and the Soviet Union increasing consideration is being given in the US Senate to ideas of a troop withdrawal from Europe.

Must this sentiment be taken seriously or can Europe confidently rely on any such amendment proving as much of a failure as, say, the Mansfield Amendment in the past?

Answer: There is in the United States a latent isolationism connected with the history and geography of the country that definitely must be taken seriously.

This is the background against which attempts to revive ideas of a withdrawal of US troops from the Federal Republic, the Mansfield Amendment of t[...] 60s, must mainly be seen.

We agree with the US administra[...] that it would be to the detriment [...] American as well as European inte[...] if this tendency were to gain the up[...] hand.

US troops are stationed here in b[...] the European and the American int[...] est, and I am confident a majority in t[...] US Senate would agree.

Question: US Defence Secretary Wei[...] berger is said to fear a new era of isol[...] tionism in the United States. Is that a[...] embellishing an arguable basic feeli[...] that in the pursuit of American interes[...] consideration for US allies in Europe [...] felt to be increasingly irksome?

Answer: Defence Secretary Weinberg[...] has clearly told the Senate the Reag[...] administration feels a revival of isol[...] tionism cannot be reconciled with U[...] interests.

I fail to see on this issue any contr[...] diction between the pursuit of US in[...] rests and consideration for those [...] America's European allies.

Mr Weinberger has thus come o[...] strongly against any rerun of the Man[...] field Amendment.

Günter Kleer
(Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz, 11 March 19[...])

■ TRANSPORT

Oil companies drop plan to increase prices

Oil companies usually increase or cut filling station prices more or less in unison. This time a bid to charge more has failed in a matter of days because the others have not followed suit.

Yet the first move was not made by small fry. The companies that tried to make the pace for a two-pfennig price increase were Aral, with 5,000 filling stations, and Texaco, with 2,500, between them accounting for one filling station in three.

But they were left holding the baby by competitors who for once held prices, with the result that Aral and Texaco sales were halved in some parts of the country.

So they returned to the fold, charging prices that are universally agreed to be costing oil companies in the Federal Republic of Germany heavy losses at present.

Price increases, as the industry knows (and the Monopolies Commission in Berlin too), will only work when all major operators are quick to follow the lead set by one of their number.

Disappointment in Bochum, the headquarters of Aral, is exceeded only by the bitterness felt at Veba Oel head office in Gelsenkirchen, both in the Ruhr.

Veba as majority shareholder in Aral badly needs a price increase in filling station prices to cover refinery and operational costs. So does Deutsche BP in Hamburg.

Neither have oil or natural gas fields in Germany to offset higher costs. Both rely entirely on imported oil.

The average price for premium grade fuel over the country as a whole is DM1.28 per litre, which hurts independent operators in particular. They can only do good business when their prices are substantially less than what the Seven Sisters charge.

But price war has been waged between filling stations for months and the independents, usually small firms, cannot compete; they lack, for one, the financial stamina.

Characteristically, there are still independents who claim the current scenario is stage-managed by the major companies to get the small fry over a barrel, if one is allowed to use the term.

In summer 1979 the independents were down to about 15 per cent of the market. They have since clambered back to 20 per cent and more.

But the conspiracy theory would seem to be a mistaken assumption in the situation, which is that average consumer prices have tumbled 26 pfennigs from a September 1981 peak of DM1.54 per litre.

There are two main factors to be considered. One is that the world supply of crude oil exceeds demand. The other is that motorists are more thrift-conscious than ever before.

Opec in Vienna could make a difference for the future of the oil market and of motor fuel price levels by deciding to cut output perceptibly.

But if producers fail to agree, prices will continue to fall or stay at low levels, much to the delight of motorists.

A West Berlin court has ruled against an attempt by the Monopolies Commission to continue probing allegations of price-fixing by the oil companies.

It would seem to have been the right decision. German motorists now pay less at the filling station than motorists anywhere else in Western Europe. They do so because market forces are allowed to operate freely.

Heiner Radzio
(Handelsblatt, 17 March 1982)

In the twinkle of an eye, or a bit slower

Cologne University research scientists say it can take motorists longer than a second to react to danger ahead and step on the brakes.

Reaction time has usually been taken to be one second, but this assumption was challenged at the annual conference of traffic lawyers and judges in Goslar.

Courts have allowed for a second at most, but Cologne trials have shown the reaction time to be up to a second and a half.

Where the experts have gone wrong is in the length of time they have assumed it takes a motorist to look ahead and realise that what he sees is an unexpected obstacle.

The human eye, says Professor Engels of Cologne, normally only notices what it sees ahead over a range of a solitary degree of the compass.

Anything on either side of this one degree is only observed peripherally. What this means to the motorist is that if anything happens in this sector he must first look at it before the reaction time can be assumed to start.

This time (the time it takes to notice, to react and to brake) is between 0.6 and one second. The time it takes the motorist to look at the peripheral obstacle is usually about half a second.

Judge Richard Spiegel of Karlsruhe says it would be wrong to add this half a second as an invariable rule of thumb. In a majority of cases one second will still be enough to cover both phases.

This should be the case when, say, an oncoming vehicle suddenly overtakes, when pedestrians are seen crossing the road ahead and when traffic lights suddenly change to red.

These are all instances in which the action, whether expected or not, occurs immediately ahead.

But Herr Spiegel says courts will now have to consider whether motorists will have had to redirect their gaze to clearly see what was about to happen.

He cited as an example a group of pedestrians on a zebra crossing ahead. The motorist sees them but not, immediately, the solitary pedestrian who rushes out after them.

This odd man out he has consciously to look at to see and then to decide whether to brake or to try and avoid him.

Being distracted by a variety of events, as at a busy crossroads, could also be evinced as a case in which an extra half-second might reasonably be allowed.

Ingmar Keller
(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, 13 March 1982)

Making way for 40 million bicycles

Bonn Transport Minister Volker Hauff has outlined details of a *DM700m* programme to build cycle tracks along 3,000 kilometres of *Bundesstrasse*, or Federal highway.

An estimated 40 million bicycles are in use in the Federal Republic of Germany and last year's domestic sales of 4.5m were substantially higher than the 2.8m motor vehicles newly registered.

Herr Hauff has great hopes of the pushbike. It is, he says, a major opportunity of saving energy.

As yet, however, it is virtually impossible to cycle from one end of the country to the other without being choked by exhaust fumes.

The Transport Ministry has issued a map of *Bundesstrassen* with cycle tracks, and it looks like an early railway map, with a section here, a section there and wide open spaces in between.

By the end of the decade Herr Hauff is confident the Federal highway network will include 11,000km of cycle track, including, for instance, an uninterrupted cycle track between Hamburg and Hanover.

Clean air, quieter roads and lower energy consumption are the results on which the Ministry is banking, not to mention the better health.

The Minister is not expecting Germans to travel long distances by pushbike, but in their home towns and village eight per cent of working people and schoolchildren already go to work or school by bike.

Sixty per cent of journeys made in town by motor vehicle are journeys of less than three kilometres, or two miles. They could well be made on two wheels.

The Federal government's cycle track programme will, he hopes, prompt the *Länder* and local authorities to follow suite. In Hamburg, a city-state, it is up to the council to reclaim cycle tracks that have been converted into parking lots.

By building more cycle tracks and separating four- and two-wheel traffic road safety should also be improved.

Bonn says that over distances of up to four kilometres, or two-and-a-half miles, the bicycle is both the most suitable and the fastest mode of transport.

Cycle tracks should ideally be at least two metres wide to allow for overtaking. This means they would at current prices, cost about DM250,000 per kilometre to build.

But Herr Hauff feels costs could be cut by converting many of the excellent tracks surfaced as part of agricultural and forestry development programmes over the past few years.

There are plans to set up a Bicycle Foundation to advise the Bonn government on biking affairs.

Eberhard Nitschke
(Die Welt, 3 March 1982)

■ THE ARTS

Industrialist comes through the carping to assemble a Soviet collection

Aachen industrialist Peter Ludwig has put together a collection of contemporary Soviet art.

He has done it through a hail of criticism that began before sale terms were agreed and continued when the selection first went on show in Moscow.

Herr Ludwig bought 84 paintings, 10 sculptures and about 200 drawings and prints to add to his private works.

The critics complained that Ludwig had no intimate knowledge of Soviet art. They asked how he could possibly put together a representative cross section of Soviet contemporary art with help only from Russian Art Ministry officials and an Arts Association known for its conservative outlook.

What would he get to see of the nonconformists, what of the avant-garde who were exhibited either not at all or only at special exhibitions of a semi-official kind in Moscow, what of the dissidents?

Did he even realise that an average Soviet museum curator would be reluctant to exhibit even part of his relatively tame collection?

In other words, how could he possibly allow himself to be led down the garden path?

A closer look shows that Herr Ludwig does not deserve this sort of accusation. He was well aware of them in advance and dismissed them irritably but specifically at a Moscow press conference.

He was accompanied to Moscow by high-ranking experts, as he had been in the past. This time there were no fewer than five museum curators from the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria.

What they had to say in passing should have been enough to ease the scepticism. The undertaking was not as ill-considered as some felt it and Herr Ludwig was anything but ill-informed and easy game for Soviet officialdom.

Over a three-year period he was shown in the course of a dozen visits to Moscow and Leningrad what Soviet officials felt was suitable for exhibition, or at least for consideration.

A look at unapproved items as well

But the museum staff who are were his aides were able, at least in Moscow, to review virtually the entire Soviet art scene, including fringes that were not looked on with official approval.

Since even officially honoured worthies of Soviet art occasionally view with critical benevolence the work of younger nonconformists, Herr Ludwig's various aides were sent from one studio to the next.

This may have had little influence on the works offered and from which he made his choice, but his critical advisers had gained a virtually complete overview of the yardsticks of Soviet artistic quality.

So they can be said to know what they are talking about when they view his purchases with critical sympathy.

The price he paid is strictly confidential but rumoured to have been moderate for a job lot. The collection should be on exhibit in Cologne this summer.



Peter Ludwig ... gets debate going. (Photo: Brigitte Friedrich)

One can but hope it will be exhibited in a single show and not, as difficulties of location were felt to necessitate, spread round several exhibition venues.

Herr Ludwig seems sure to proved right in his assumption that the show will prompt heated debate. A first glance at the show as exhibited in the House of the Artist in Moscow would seem to bear out the view of Professor Ruhrberg, curator of the Ludwig Museum in Cologne.

As a curator whose job it was, he said in Moscow, to show full critical judgement when deciding whether or not to buy new exhibits, he felt roughly half the purchases met the strictest yardsticks, while some were most significant.

The remainder, which was far from insignificant, would be found to be justified in terms of cultural diplomacy, always assuming the criterion was accepted.

Herr Ludwig had wanted to close a painfully felt gap. He was well aware that there were still significant gaps in his collection but wanted nonetheless to show a wider German public what was being painted (and how) in the Soviet Union.

He aimed to show what had gained general recognition and not merely that of museum curators but also of the general public.

This he can certainly be said to have done. Of the 108 artists whose works are included, 47 have state awards or prizes to their name.

This might well create some surprises in Cologne. By no means all Soviet artists worthy of the name abide strictly by the canons of bland socialist realism, and that is a fact that is widely acknowledged.

But an unprepared German public will be surprised to find that much that appears to be conventional socialist realism, such as a conventionally painted Lenin against a Kremlin background, turns out at second glance to be unexpectedly ambiguous.

Not for nothing have Ludwig's purchases led to unrest and disputes, especially in the Soviet Artists' Association.

It is rumoured in Moscow that a number of guardians of the holy grail of Soviet artistic purity feel that the Ludwig collection has caught Soviet art with its trousers down in too many cases.

The high note in a sharp key that the curator of the Moscow House of the Artist felt obliged to describe as the keynote of the exhibition was in reality seldom in evidence.

Moscow officials are well aware of this, so the act of cultural diplomacy Herr Ludwig would like his purchase to be considered to form part of works in two directions.

First, it briefs the German public; second, it obliges Soviet art officials to review or at least marshal better arguments on behalf of their criteria.

An exhibition with something to say

In the wake of the Moscow-Paris super-exhibition and the major exhibition of German expressionists in Leningrad, matters are in a greater state of flux in their ranks than ever before.

Peter Ludwig has, as the exhibition will show, taken a sample of Soviet art that, although it may not sound out all the waters, certainly has something to say for itself.

It could well be at least as much as the leading representatives of Soviet nonconformism as listed in exhibition catalogues in New York or Paris have to say for themselves.

Uwe Engelbrecht
(Stuttgarter Zeitung, 9 March 1982)

Woman composer sounds note in a male composition

German women composers have a much harder time making a name for themselves than men. But Siegrid Ernst-Meister from Bremen achieved the distinction of being awarded a six-month scholarship to attend the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

It is an institution that was not set up until after the Second World War and is not as well-known as the Villa Massimo in Rome, which is run along similar lines.

The Bremen composer was able to spend six months at the Cité's enormous headquarters near the Paris hôtel de ville, to gain ideas, to make contacts, to study and generally to be free from everyday worries and professional commitments.

In her six months in the French capital she was also able to give two concerts.

She lived among 250 artists from 50 countries at the Cité, but there were only three women among the 15 composers there: two Japanese women and her.

She took particular advantage of the wide range of contemporary music available.

Concerts are held by scholarship-holders at intervals of 10 to 14 days. One, a mixture of styles and instruments, she had to share with a French pianist.

She performed her Seven Miniatures

KielerNachrichten

on the Lines of Japanese Haiku for deep voice, viola and piano and Quatro mani dentro e fuoni for two players at one piano.

She and other scholarship-holders performed the pieces, while at her second concert her Variations for a Large Orchestra and Whither? for three groups, based on a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann, were to be heard.

These are several of the works from the numerically limited but varied output of the 52-year-old Ludwigshafen-born composer, whose oeuvre includes works of various kinds to be played by a variety of groups.

She developed from the influence of the modern classics, Bartok and Stravinsky, and increasingly adopted the techniques of Ligeti and Penderecki, finally including aleatory composition techniques.

Hardly anyone, let alone a woman, can make a living from composing modern music. Women still tend not to be taken seriously, to have particular difficulty in finding a concert organiser and frequently need to have their works played by colleagues and students.

So Frau Ernst-Meister needs to earn a living, and this she does as a teacher, first in Heidelberg, now in Bremen, of musical form and modern score analysis at the Academy of Performing Arts and Music.

She also works with a improvisation group, with the film class, and is head of a youth and popular music college where she teaches the piano.

Having always been, and continuing to be at the receiving end of discrimination, she is a keen member of the International Working Party on Women and Music.

It is a group that strives manfully to promote equal rights for women in the world of music.

Martin Sellmayer
(Kieler Nachrichten, 6 March 1982)

Children hold exhibition

The first permanent exhibition of children's art in the Federal Republic of Germany has been opened in Cologne.

A collection of painting and sculpture by young people from many countries, it forms part of the municipal Youth Centre.

The exhibition and the centre, where children jointly do craft work, paint and play, are backed financially by Cologne city council and the *Land* government of North Rhine-Westphalia.

dpa
(Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz, 6 March 1982)

■ EDUCATION

Problems on increase as children fall victim to faulty schools system

Too many children are in schools which are too large. Too many are shoved into one classroom, and too many have to travel too far to school.

There is not enough play space and exercise facilities; curricula often ignore children's needs.

These, says a German educationist, are why so many children in Germany have physical and mental problems. Many are overweight and others cannot concentrate and are restless.

Professor Kurt Hartung says children's disorders have reached a level where they are "a serious danger to family life, society and the state."

Professor Hartung is a contributor to a collection of works on the problem published by the Munich-based Education Institute.

Tübingen child psychiatrist Reinhard Lempp outlines a typical case history.

A girl who was full of life as a small child began about the age of 13 to withdraw into herself. She became increasingly listless and inactive.

Initially, he thought the change was because of puberty. But he changed his ind when the girl failed to recover. Suddenly, five or six years after the withdrawal began, the girl got better. It was a few weeks after she left school.

He now believes that school stress was the cause.

Professor Lempp: "I am convinced that it is a matter of major importance if a child spends a considerable part of its childhood and youth in a state of depression.

"Such an experience extending over many years must of necessity have a negative influence on a child's attitude towards life, its environment and, ultimately, its performance."

Professor Hartung lists several causes: the industrial society has radically changed the child's environment through technology, motorisation, automation, performance stress, "anonymity



within the mass, urbanisation and a flood of sensory perception."

Restricted play and exercise facilities frequently result in health impairments such as nervousness, *inability to concentrate*, "kinetic restlessness, poor posture, obesity and psychosomatic disorders."

Reactions to school stress differ. In the past, child psychiatrists concentrated their atention on aggressiveness.

Schoolchildren shove chewing gum into highly sensitive locks, causing irreparable damage; they destroy carpeting, break open lockers and systematically devastate the toilet facilities.

Lower Saxony's Education Minister Werner Remmers last year presented a documentation of school vandalism. The study's title speaks for itself: *Schule kaputt?*

Studies showing that attitudes that are the exact opposite of aggression should be taken more seriously than aggression were ignored by the public.

According to Professor Lempp, depressive reactions are now more *important than aggressiveness ever was.*

He concludes: "Unlike in earlier years when protest, unwillingness to learn, aggressiveness and general disruptiveness were characteristic of those who couldn't make it at school, today these attitudes play a secondary role compared with depression, withdrawal and resignation."

He considers the marked increase of depression over the past 20 years an alarming signal and presents two rea*sons for his grave concern.*

Depressive moods, reactions and attitudes (which have increased dramatically since the mid-1970s) are much less conspicuous than aggressiveness, he argues.

Neither the teacher nor the parents are aware of the gradually spreading resignation and depression in a child — the more so since this mostly occurs during puberty and is therefore attribu*ted to the typical changes a child under*goes in that period of its life.

Depression is also easily overlooked because it is much less disruptive than aggression and because teachers find it much easier to cope with a depressive than with an aggressive child.

Most disturbing, however, is the fact that child psychiatrists have established that children who were aggressive and disruptive at school later become more capable of coping with life than those who had to see a psychiatrist because of inhibitions, depressions and phobias.

Professor Lempp: "To put it another way, depressive attitudes and reactions are on the rise and, consequently, so the number of children and juveniles who in later life will find it more difficult to be successful and cope with the demands placed on them.

"Our school system not only creates failures at school but also in life. Contrary to their basic function, our schools do not help but only hinder many children's ability to master life."

Professor Lempp does not deny that most children leave school without problems and that their ability to cope with life has been promoted. He stresses, however, that even this has not been fully ascertained.

Most are helped at the expense of the few

But it appears, he says, that the help for the most schoolchildren is at the expense of the few.

The child who resigns in the face of the problems confronting him at school and at home needs much more attention than he has been *receiving* up to now.

Schools should not only know the change in the child's environment but should adapt to it in terms of instruction and organisation.

The view put forward by many experts that the children of today just happen to be different from those of 10 or 20 years ago is irrefutable. But the conclusions to be drawn from this fact are long overdue.

Friedhelm Henkel

(Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt, 7 March 1982)

Congress will look at words and meanings — if any

The congress of the Mannheim-based Institute for the German Language (IDS) will have only one item on its agenda: difficult words in German.

The congress will be attended by 250 Germanists, linguists and lexicographers from Germany and abroad.

In its preview, the IDS says that not only foreigners find the German language difficult but that even Germans have to struggle with difficult words.

These words are particularly common in official forms, newspapers, radio and television.

They are used in instructions for home appliances and medicines.

This can endanger life.

Terminology used in sport and politics will also be dealt with at the Mannheim congress.

The IDS is now working on the major project of a comprehensive dictionary of difficult words scheduled for completion in the late 1980s.

Linguists complain that their particular discipline is still largely ignored. Even ten years after linguistics entered school curricula, the linguists still deplore the fact that their discipline plays a secondary role compared with the study of literature.

The 200 participants at the annual congress of the German Society for Linguistics, Cologne, bemoaned the fact that North Rhine-Wesphalia has not yet introduced linguistics as a special field in the teaching of German.

Only one of the current draft guidelines for the senior grades of secondary schools provides for the study of linguistics.

Another guideline contains linguistics as a "recommendation" only.

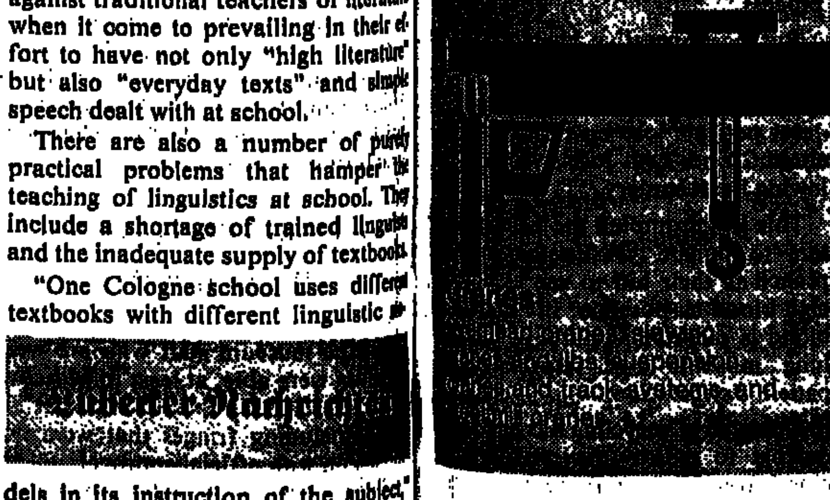
Linguistics at school analyses the language as used in the broadest sense. The objective is to track down the largely still unexplored "functioning" of the language.

The range of these studies extends from the analysis of speech within the family all the way to its use in advertising, the media and politics.

"Pure" linguists have a difficult stand against traditional teachers of literature when it come to prevailing in their effort to have not only "high literature" but also "everyday texts" and simple speech dealt with at school.

There are also a number of purely practical problems that hamper the teaching of linguistics at school. They include a shortage of trained linguists and the inadequate supply of textbooks.

"One Cologne school uses different textbooks with different linguistic mo-



dels in its instruction of the subject," *criticised a high school teacher.*

In its discussions, the congress paid little attention to those actually concerned: the high school students themselves.

It ignored the question as to whether our high school students, who already hav enough on their plates, are supposed to do the additional work.

It also ignored the much discussed problem of the excessive science orien*tation of our schools.*

Remarked one of the linguists: "I'd be glad if I knew as much as our high school students are expected to know."

Petra Schmitt

(Lübecker Nachrichten, 5 March 1982)

Not everyone is starry-eyed about classroom technology



Exhibitors at the Hanover *Didacta*, a show of teaching aids and machines, claim that technology is gaining ground in instruction.

But it seems that there is a growing *scepticism* towards technology in the classroom.

Polls by the Allensbach Opinion Research Institute show that only 30 per cent of our population (1966: 72 per cent) regard technology as a "blessing".

So we are back to the old question: "Technology — curse or blessing?"

The answer is certainly not that the continued electronic build-up at our schools is to be blamed *for our growing* disenchantment with technology.

Only teachers who have been stymied by the intricacies of a teaching machine in front of a maliciously grinning class and have had to give up in the end are likely to reject these machines.

Opponents can also be found among embittered parents who had to help pay for expensive school computers or a language lab and watch them gather dust for lack of trained teachers.

Naturally, no responsible education minister will take this attitude.

Yet Lower Saxony's Education Minister Werner Remmers *has just admitted* that he never visualised the school of the future so entirely as a place of audio-visual and electronic communication.

Is he therefore an enemy of technology, innovation and modern teaching machines?

The answer could simply be that educationalists have had their first rude awakening as to the allegedly unlimited technical possibilities at school.

The worried Baden-Württemberg commentators could learn from them that a healthy scepticism is the best basis for the fruitful use of technology.

(Süddeutsche Zeitung, 10 March 1982)

■ MEDICINE

A sneaky complaint: tumour of the prostate gland

One in three men in the Western world over 50 develops a tumour of the prostate gland.

The tumour can be either benign or malignant. In most cases the victim doesn't know anything is wrong and it remains latent until very old age.

In the cases where the tumour does become active, it can cause serious problems.

In the Far East and central Africa prostate tumours are almost non-existent.

The subject was one of the major themes at the congress of the German Endocrinological Society in Salzburg.

The phenomenon that virtually confines the condition to Western countries has puzzled experts in endocrinology for a long time.

(Endocrinology is the study of internal secretions and how they affect the body.)

Japanese who have emigrated to, say, the United States remain unaffected, but their sons are prone.

A comparative study on prostate hyperplasia (enlargement) is now in progress in Rotterdam and Kyoto, Japan.

It has been established that prostate hyperplasia is rampant in the Mediterranean region, probably for genetic reasons.

It is also certain that testosterone, a male hormone, plays a major role in the hormonal system of men between 50 and 55 — especially in affecting the ratio between testosterone and estrogen — a female hormone.

The testosterone level in men of this age begins to decline.

Urologists told the congress that they suspect this change in the testosterone level could be responsible for the enlargement of the prostate gland.

Another topic dealt with was fertility control. Delegates stressed the importance of finding some means of control for Third World women to check the population explosion.

Certain hormonal preparations are already in use. They are injected subcutaneously (this can be done by medical assistants) and prevent pregnancy for about seven years. Large scale field studies are now in progress in Egypt and Thailand.

In the industrial world, women are more concerned with something that would enable them to bear a male or a female baby at will.

The problem facing scientists is the question: What are the factors determining the development of the foetus's sex?

To what extent does the brain act as a sex organ? And how does the male brain differ from the female?

Dr Klaus-Dieter Döhler and Professor Hans-Joachim Kretschmann of the Hanover Medical School presented their findings on the influence of hormones on the male/female programming of the brain structure.

The decisive factor is that sex differences in the brain structure are not caused by genetic influences but only by hormonal effects.

The basic element in sex determination is the male X-chromosome which in the gonad (primary reproductive gland) develops into testes.

If the X-chromosome is missing, the gonad develops into ovaries. And this is as far as the influence of sex chromosomes goes. All other decisions on sexual development hinge on hormones.

The sensitive phase of sex determination in humans begins around the third month of pregnancy. The fact is that the brain, which to some extent controls the maturing of sex cells, is itself a sex organ in a way.

The decisive element lies in the fact that sex-related differences in the structure of the brain are not due to genetic impulses but to hormonal effects.

Although these findings are still based on animal experiments only, Dr Döhler warned of the possibility that pregnancy tests using estrogen-based substances and the use of the Pill could affect the sex development of the foetus.

This could perhaps also provide new insights into trans-sexuality and homosexuality.

Another important aspect is that the development of a certain area of the brain could perhaps be influenced through hormones. But here the last word must rest with medical ethics.

Franz Mayrhofer

(Stuttgarter Zeitung, 2 March 1982)

Stomach cancer on the decline

Stomach cancer is on the decline throughout the world, says Heidelberg surgeon Professor Christian Herfarth.

But he told the 16th German Cancer Congress in Munich that this form of cancer remains a major killer.

He said that reasons for its decline are still not known.

There are marked regional differences in its frequency. For example it is found less often in the United States than in Japan.

There are also variations within countries. In Germany it is more frequent in Bavaria, Lower Saxony and East Württemberg than elsewhere.

In 1979, it killed 18,504 people of the Federal Republic in Germany's 150,000 cancer fatalities. That puts it third in the cancer death league.

Professor Dietrich Schmähl of the Heidelberg Cancer Research Centre suggested that the decline in stomach cancer is due to more stringent food laws, especially control of additives.

But American scientists say widespread refrigeration has reduced poisoning by mildew fungi and cancer-causing agents. Changed eating habits and better food also have helped.

Unfortunately, the decline in stomach cancer is offset by an increase in certain intestinal cancers which is attributed to better quality food — and hence the longer time it takes for its passage through the digestive tract — and to lack of exercise.

Professor Herfarth suggested that the regional differences in the incidence of stomach cancer indicate that invironmental factors also play a role.

A high incidence of stomach cancer has also been found in certain families and population groups.

The Italian mini state, San Marino, with its population of 30,000 has a particularly high ratio of this type of cancer, Professor Schmähl said.

He cited the family of Napoleon as an example of family-related incidence of stomach cancer.

Napoleon's typical pose, holding his right hand inside his waistcoat at stomach level, suggests that he wanted to warm his stomach because it ached.

dpa

(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, 5 March 1982)

A boom trade in human organs alleged

German university hospitals are [...]gedly engaged in a booming t[...] with human organs.

A former employee of the Pathol[...]cal Institute of Tübingen University told the Hamburg illustrated maga[...] *Neue Revue* that he himself had on [...] occasions removed certain parts of [...] brain from bodies brought to him [...] autopsy.

The buyers, he said, were represen[...]tives of pharmaceuticals compa[...] who paid up to DM15 for various [...] of the brain. The organs, he said, [...] removed without informing the nex[...] kin.

The magazine claims that this pra[...]ce has been confirmed by Profe[...] Adalbert Bohle of the Tübingen Uni[...]sity Hospital.

His argument was that the family [...]greed to the autopsy and that "t[...] would have withdrawn this agreem[...] had they been told that certain org[...] would be removed."

A representative of one of the ph[...]maceuticals companies that bought [...] organs is also said to have confirm[...] the practice.

He is quoted as having said: "I[...] really bad that we must resort to s[...] practices to obtain the raw materia[...] a certain preparation; but unless we [...] we don't get it."

Professor Erich Samson, a Kiel [...]pert on criminal law, the magazine s[...] claimed that some 60,000 autopsies [...] performed in this country every y[...] without informing the family of the [...]ceased. He stressed that there were [...] detailed laws on autopsy.

dpa

(Süddeutsche Zeitung, 5 March 1982)

Bring-your-own-blood scheme for surgery cases

Doctors at a German hospital are using patients' own blood for transfusion during surgery.

The main ground is health: donated blood carries risks of infection including hepatitus.

The experiment is being carried out at the Erlangen Heart Centre.

People due to go under the knife start making donations regularly months before.

Many types of surgery cause a lot of blood to be lost, which means that transfusions are needed.

Heart patients are ideal for this project because their operations are set down well in advance.

Professors Karl Theodor Schricker and Jürgen von der Ende and Dr Bernd Neidhardt of the Erlangen Centre are using deep-frozen blood from the patient in such complicated types of surgery as bypass operations and the insertion of new heart valves.

The problem is the involved procedure needed to keep the blood fresh. The red blood corpuscles are separated from the plasma, which can then be kept at temperatures of between 20 and 40 deg. C.

Blood corpuscles are shock frozen at minus 200 deg. C and then stored at minus 130 deg. C.

The Erlangen doctors are certain that the cost and effort is well worth while. They experienced no serious difficulties in the provision of the blood and the subsequent use of it during surgery.

For 71 per cent of the surgery cases, the blood the patients themselves provided met the requirements and no additional blood was needed.

Where more was needed, the danger of hepatitits infection was reduced because most of the blood had been supplied by the patient himself and the risk ratio depends on the amount of foreign blood.

Not a single case of hepatitis was recorded among the test cases.

This "auto-transfusion", as the doctors call it, is also important for patients with rare blood groups for whom it is difficult to find matching donors.

The loss of blood offset by the transfusion usually occurs after rather than during surgery.

This is so because patients undergoing heart surgery are attached to a heart-lung machine during the operation and lost blood is recycled in t[...] process.

But post-operative haemorrhag[...] common, and the accumulated blo[...] has to be drained off.

ost patients lose up to 800ml thou[...] about 20 per cent lose even more [...]lowing heart surgery.

This has prompted the Erlangen do[...]tors to pursue yet another new [...]proach in their bid to use as little [...]eign blood as possible: the drained [...] blood is recycled in parts of the hea[...] lung machine and returned to [...] patient's circulation.

This type of recycling has enabled [...] doctors to reduce the use of forei[...] blood from 73 to 49 per cent.

Both types of auto-transfusion [...] safe. The problem is that deep freez[...] entails considerable investment [...] operating costs and requires high[...] trained staff.

Ideally, the two approaches (u[...] drained off post-operative blood [...] the patient's own blood donation[...] should be combined because the pr[...]cessing of the drained off blood [...] cheap. Also, it reduces the amount [...] deep frozen blood needed.

A widespread use of the method pi[...]neered in Erlangen could wipe out [...] dreaded hepatitis B after heart surgery.

Dieter Schwab

(Frankfurter Rundschau, 6 March 1982)

■ MODERN LIVING

Tough on peepers: bottoms up gets the thumbs down

A West Berlin left-wing newspaper collected such a ferocious backlash after it ran an article about peep shows that its next edition came out with some blank pages and the author went on extended unpaid leave.

Women's groups occupied the offices of *Tageszeitung*, or *Taz* for short, and drenched the walls and doors with graffiti from spray cans.

They even sprayed the inside of the coffee machine. One message threatened the reporter concerned, Michael Sontheimer, with emasculation.

Some of the newspaper staff were openly jubilant about the turn of events. Others weren't. At any event they were collectively unable to recover sufficiently for the next edition and four blank pages appeared instead of local coverage.

The episode revolved round the live, what-the-butler-saw type performances known as peep shows, normally featuring nude women.

In February, the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe ruled that peep shows were immoral.

It said that women were presented as nothing but sexual objects. The shows offended human dignity. Local authorities must be allowed to refuse licences and withdraw existing licences.

It was a final decision by the highest *court of* appeal. It was made after a



peep-show proprietor appealed against a refusal to grant him a licence.

In West Berlin there are five peep shows. All fall in the area of the Charlottenburg borough council.

And the council reacted quickly to the court decision: it said it would consider closing all five.

Yet it is an area with plenty of problems. The question is: are peep shows really so important to warrant all this fuss?

And this is where Herr Sontheimer came in. *Taz* was begun a couple of years ago because of what was felt to be a one-sided approach by the West Berlin media to such issues as squatting, ecology, feminism and foreigners.

Sontheimer asked in his article whether Charlottenburg had nothing better to do than run round banning peep shows.

He pointed out that there were about 1,000 bars and night clubs where sex was traded at an even lower level.

"Freedom," he wrote, "may not be a peep show, but a state that seeks to regulate sexuality is its very opposite." In his commentary he quoted peep show girls. "What we do here," one told him, "you can see in just about any magazine." Another said: "If they really close us we'll hold a demo."

Sontheimer's article was printed in the issue dated 26 February, interspersed as usual with remarks made (in brackets) by the compositor.

In the night of 1 March the local office of the newspaper was devastated by a sit-in. Doors and walls were drenched in spray-can graffiti, including announcements of Sontheimer's impending emasculation.

A colleague of Sontheimer, Ute Scheub, wrote that Sontheimer had probably upset readers in the past with unpopular views such as favouring talks between squatters and the city council.

"If we really only wanted to read what suits our own world view we could immediately pulp all newspapers and books," she said.

Sontheimer has taken two months' unpaid leave to wonder whether it is worthwhile trying to write for an unconventional newspaper:

"A world view based on good and bad, black and white, is boring and dangerous. So is a newspaper that is made by people who hold such views."

One reader cabled the paper to outline how all future problems with coverage could be avoided: by taking half-page ads from estate agents, food stores and a department store.

All editorial staff but one should be sacked; fairy tale tellers could be hired instead. The paper could be filled with agency reports and occasional rewrites from other newspapers.

If the number of subscribers were to fall, that should present no problem, he felt. All the paper needed to do was to sell out to newspaper magnate Axel Springer.

The debate continues, conclusions have yet to be reached, but the main beneficiary is already apparent.

Several readers have written in to say that it has taken the hue and cry over the peep show story to get them to visit a peep show, put a mark in the slot and see for themselves what it is all about.

Claus Menzel

(Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt, 14 March 1982)

Great mysteries of dentistry: Chopper owns up

Chopper, the ghost that haunted a dental practice for nearly a year, has finally been caught. He was none other than the dentist himself and his assistant.

Kurt Bachseitz, 60, and his 17-year-old assistant Claudia Judenmann hoodwinked the Regensburg, Bavaria, postal authorities and the police for months.

They disguised their voices and made the mysterious voice sound like it was coming from other parts of the room.

Claudia even appeared on TV, together with the voice of Chopper.

Elmar Fischer, Regensburg's chief public prosecutor, says CID officers heard Chopper in the practice in February and were convinced it was just a trick, but they had to be absolutely sure.

Claudia has made a confession; the dentist and his wife have closed the

Nordwest-Zeitung

practice and gone to a sanatorium at their own request.

Claudia and Dr Bachseitz are liable to proceedings for feigning a crime, an offence for which up to three years' imprisonment or a fine may be imposed. But they will not be charged.

The postal authorities are said to have spent over DM60,000 in weeks of checking the practice with the latest equipment. They are likely to present a bill.

Claudia and her dentist are said to have egged each other on until the ghost hit the headlines and there was no going back.

They so perfected their technique so that people standing next to them thought they heard the voice coming from another part of the room.

dpa

(Nordwest Zeitung, 9 March 1982)

Writer's opinion just too much to swallow

The owner of a restaurant in Münster, Westphalia, is suing for damages a gourmet magazine tester who criticised his restaurant.

The restaurant is the Westfälischer Friede, or Peace of Westphalia, as the treaty ending the Thirty Years' War is known in German.

The men facing each other in a Düsseldorf court are restaurateur Werner Otto Jedamzik and the tester Armin Diel, 29, a law student who studies the menus of leading restaurants for the gourmet press in his spare time.

The case is the first of its kind ever to be held in Germany.

"The 1975 Riesling I was served," Diel wrote, "was fine and dry, but never in this world was it a Riesling."

He was even more scathing about the restaurant's speciality, roast duck.

"It was an enormous bird that looked like a force-fed Hungarian goose and and tasted like one too: stringy and dry inside, covered in a layer of fat and as hard as a board outside.

"It seemed to have been parboiled and blanched before being lowered into deep fat to get the right temperature and colour."

This criticism was first published in the local paper and caused only a local upset. The Münster hoteliers' and caterers' association said Diel was a cannibal, the owner of another reputable restaurant called him a gastronomic lout.

Diel, who had paid DM264.40, plus value-added tax, for the meal he, his wife and two others had tested, was constantly pestered by nocturnal phone calls.

His car tyres were slashed one day when he parked near Jedamzik's restaurant. Could the damage have been done by a kitchen knife?

He certainly needn't park near the Westfälischer Friede again for a while. He has been notified by the restaurant-owner's lawyer that he is banned indefinitely from entering the premises.

Jedamzik decided on litigation when the review was printed by a nationwide gourmet magazine. His restaurant is patronised by stars such as Hermann Prey and Udo Jürgens and he is suing for damages.

Diel, the plaintiff's lawyers say, is prejudiced. As the owner of a Nahe vineyard he is bound to be prejudiced against restaurants that do not serve Nahe wines.

(Hannoversche Allgemeine, 10 March 1982)